
The
patch
work
ark

Preface

The material in this anthology is the work of students enrolled, during the 1966-67 term, in the Creative Writing classes at the University of Manitoba and in Miss Sharon Lea Richman's class at United College. Rather than allow all the images, ideas and characters that had sustained us through the winter to vanish without trace in the spring floods, we decided to build a "patchwork ark" in which this poetic community might continue to flourish.

The title is from the verse prologue to Dylan Thomas's Collected Poems. The cover was designed by Zhdan Rudnyckyi, a student at the School of Art.

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George Amabile

Ed Kleiman

Spring, 1967

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There Are All Kinds of Darts in the World

There are all kinds of darts in the world:
some for war, some for play,
some have even stuck into language
so hard, they've become clichés.

Darts, can have all kinds of uses,
some are spoken, some thrown;
they can come in sets or single...
Dartboards
are always alone.

And poets
are somewhat like dartboards,
they make targets for all kinds of darts:
some fly at their paper-thin products,
some at their actions and thoughts.
Dartboards are always silent...
Here my simile stalls:

Poets can always write poems,
Dartboards hang on walls.

Zhdan Rudnyckyi

Dusk

Fireflies.
A smouldering ground fire spills smoke
a soothing incense
over curly-haired cupolas
of sun drugged hills.
First each distant farmyard
bares its light
a slight bit further
at the smoke,
an odalisk silk veil,
that trails down
the dim lit spines
of pine stands
and stacks of hay,
lies heavily upon the ripened orchards,
fills the ditches to the brim,
and overflows
over the road
and rolls
along the rows
of ordered corn.
Each stalk displays its parchment
and hoarsely whispers exorcisms.
The smoke drifts
and fills
the empty shapes
forgotten in the mass
of corn,
and smothers out the farmlight
and seals out the starlight
and vanishes in the dark.

Zhdan Rudnyckyi

One Starry Night

One starry night
a star
got lost
and dropped to earth.
The people cried,
"look--
there's a star rolling on the street"
and laughed
and kicked it,
and scared
the living daylight
out of the poor thing.
Nowhere to go
it climbed a pole
and hid inside a street-lamp;
and in the morning
there was nothing there
except a pile
of crystal
teardrops.

Zhdan Rudnyckyi

Somewhere on the Bottom of My Nights

Somewhere on the bottom of my nights
Burns a white candle
A wind came and didn't put it out
A bull came and didn't put it out
A horse came with a hoary mane
A tank came on tip toe
A plane came with a sky parasol
And didn't put it out and didn't put it out
Each bent over
Each lit his own
A wind came with a candle
A horse came with a candle
A bull a tank a plane
Came with a candle came with a candle
A classy glass palace
Came with a small candle
A small gray mosquito
Came with a big candle
Somewhere on the bottom of my nights
Burns a white candle
I feel glad I feel sad
I feel glad I feel bad
I feel numb from oversweetness
Somewhere on the bottom of my nights
Burns a white candle.

Ivan Drach

(translated from Ukrainian by Zhdan Rudnyckyi)

The Parable of the Man-Child

the man-child was enthralled by
frost
forms on window glass shining
topaz and opal in the afternoon Sun
patterns
undecifered
& in light he asked
his father why
Suns disappear
(on winter afternoons

the Sun loving father despoiled
jewels with his calloused hand

...Sun pierced
the eyes of the man-child
who fled from light
with a memory
to play
tin soldiers in a shuttered room

J. Latremouille

MORNING DREAMS

by Douglas Elias

The old man stood in his slippers, his hands holding an old leather-bound book, and looked at his room.

The light, with its red parchment shade, hung in the centre of the ceiling from a cloth-insulated wire. The pale blood-coloured light had long ago given up its try for cheerfulness, as the undisturbed dust of many years had slowly smothered it. The shadow of the shade trembled slightly on the walls around him. The wallpaper was yellow, with thin red stripes in groups of three. The paper had been selected because it hid age very well, and so would not need to be cleaned too often. Even now, the old man had to look carefully to see the marks left by a thousand sweaty palms that stained the lower part of the wall. The upper part, that part above the shadow, had been collecting the smoke from a hundred old pipes, and had changed from the colour of ripe corn to the colour of the old man's morning urine. An etching bearing the title "Hounds Slaying the Hart" hung in a black oak frame on the wall facing the window. The window was set back in a small gable, and, since there was no room for curtains, had only a roller-blind. The lower edge of the blind was decorated with small tassels attached to a heavy cord. The old man had noticed some time before that a few of the tassels were missing, and one day he had cut off every third one, and now it looked even again.

A small table leaned into one corner, around from the gable. It had been painted not long ago, and the grey drops that hung around the edges were still soft when the old man squeezed them. There still could be seen on its surface small grooves left by burned-out cigarettes that had fallen from the warped, aluminum ashtray in the table's centre. The ashtray had been donated by a woman's society, which had made about a dozen of them as Christmas presents for the place about three years ago. The old man had discovered that the leg of the table that was in the corner had been broken at one time, and was now held together with painted-over surgical tape. He was careful, then, not to lean on the table when he paused for a moment during his trips to look out the window.

The head of his bed was in the other corner, around from the gable. He liked the bed there, for when he pulled the shade before his many daytime rests, it was darkest in the room where his head lay. There were no holes in the shade, but it was worn thin in spots, and, when down, let light through in blotches. The foot of the bed reached down towards the door, which, when opened, touched the steel bedstead. Every morning, the attendant swung the door open so it slammed into the bed, waking the old man, with a start, from his dreams. His dreams would flee from the sound, and he would lay there for a long moment, and almost - but not quite - cry. He would then get his feet into his slippers, and stand there on the edge of memory, his hands reaching for the rim of thought, and look at shadows of reflection.

****

The Cat on Cambridge Street Cries

The cat on Cambridge Street cries.
In the cracked and oily window
Its puffy tail is shaking a negative reply
To the cracked and oily world.
Green eyes threaten the barking villains
That once tried to usurp the Egyptian gods.
It is in the dark when movement has solidified
That this frozen and imperturbable creature
Remembers Graymalkin, but forgets her secrets
All mastery lost but the memory, claws clean and sharp.
It leaps and screams to enter a world
No longer visibly cracked and oily.
Now the cat on Cambridge Street cries,
For it is the mirrored day he sees
Through unreflecting eyes.
How little the window matters-
Since on one side the rioting cur awaits
And on the other a calico future
With a purring spinster, dried,
And dressed in gingham,
Devouring dog-eared books. Wizened
Whiskers, groping in the dark.

Ronald Bonham

Haiku on Kafka

Maze-fed crow flying
thru a dark kaleidoscope:
death by mirror point

J. Latremouille

A Rock

Speckled grey rock
Carried from a world
Of cliffs and gullies,
That water-forced past.

Your mirror points catch
Candle light.

And you sit, on a shelf
Among books, braced
In the dust.

From many black eyes
You wink and witness.

Joanna Van der Goes

Risen From. . .

You were with me in the shadows, blind watcher;
Caressing with frosty hands
a pallid cheek.
You were with me in the bar-rooms, dead builder,
blitzing the Parthenon to rubble.
Indulgent genie of lethargy;
You watched from cliff-tops as I sifted black earth
on the backs of my hands.
But you are gone now, when I have caught
the snowy Egret and put him in my tarnished lamp.

Martin Levin

The Laundromat

Returning to the chore
Of cleansing
In these mechanical boxes

I watch the chaos
Tumble and fall.

Joanna Van der Goes

the parking lot attendant

by f.n. schoen

the greasy man surveyed the street. he unbuttoned his tattered suit jacket. the checker men in his pocket pulled the faded material back and allowed the watermelon belly to protrude.

'such a hot day' he muttered.

he lifted his hat. thick brown fingers ran through the invisible hair and methodically replaced the shabby panama. he turned and paced through the lot, critically inspecting the wheeled clientele.

'dat bloody sun'

his forearm stroked his face, sweeping sweat and sesame seeds from between rushes of beard.

'vhat's dis?'

a shiny new ford convertible was parked in slot nineteen, its lid neatly flipped. his eyes plopped into the space between the buckets.

'ahhh?'

'dey put da shift on da floor'

he prest the melon against the fender for a closer look. time's fingers reached through his hat and he grunted an earthly chuckle.

'dose vere da days'

'i member sally and da twenty nine chev'

'haah!' he snorted, 'ever time i shift da gears, i pull a hair out'

the melon oscillated in delight, and further reponded to these uninvited pressures by ejecting a robust belch. he leaned away from the car and removed the jacket, exposing wide suspenders soaked in sweat. the bulge rotated and the greasy man propped his broadside against the door panel.

'sonabitch' as he leapt from the car, patting his fried hams.

'dat black a hellava colour for a roadster'

time nudged him a little harder.

'course harry had one. . . .that zippy little model A with da rumble seat'

the hams were forgotten now.

'yah. . . .dat sure vere fun dat time vee vent for a ride in dat car. . . . me sittin on da outside, henry in da middle, and lulu on da udder side. . . . boy! she sure vas somethin'

wide eyes ran up and down as the conjured lulu cavorted for his inspection.
'vee vas out on da old lake road, all sardine squeezed in dat rumble seat and den i got da idea. my righ hand lay loose in da bend of da seat behind henry's back. . . .so i sneak it up and grab lulu by da puss. she look damn hard and quick at henry.
den i diddled her'
'hank! stop it!'
'w-w-what?'
'stop it i say!'
'wh-what's the matter?'
diddle diddle.
'lulu vorked her leff arm free and start to belt da piss outta henry. . .
boy. . .i laff like hell. . . .jeez chris. . .den i. . .!
the clock in the ford shot him into now.
'huhh?'
'tree aclock already?'
the greasy man fondled the checker men in the jacket pocket and he remembered the daily game he played with charley, the old pensioner of the park. the seedless wonder pointed one way. . .and then the other.
nope, the boss not around. the attendant slunk towards the park.

****

The Romantic

She is alone, now,
Kneeling in the garden.

Upstairs,
In her room,
A breeze through the window
Shivers the curtains
And blows a fallen piece
Across the board.

Her finger twists an oak twig
In the grass
Unconsciously.
It is the white sky time
Of autumn.

Early that morning
There was a mole
Dead
On the walk,
Its elf tail
Neatly curled behind it.

She didn't eat,
But for two hours read Alastor
And The Cenci
From a gilt
Leather bound Shelley,
Then sighed;
And closing the book with a rose,
Stepped out.

High up,
A small white bird circles
Crying
In the sky.
The breeze blows
In whorls about the garden;
It catches
And unfolds
Long strands of her hair.
She kneels down
In the cold grass
And waits.

Pat Taylor

SPRING THAW

from a novel in progress
by Helen Kruger

Anna slipped into her jacket and went out in the mid-morning sunshine. The big collie greeted her joyfully, waving his bushy-tail with anticipation. From the direction of the barn came the faint tap - tap of pounding hammers.

"Come on, Shep," she called, walking off toward the sound.

The spring thaw had filled and flooded the slough behind the barn. Earlier in spring Anna had skated on the ice which covered the water. Later, the increasing warmth of the March sun had melted the ice to a wobbly thinness. Anna had tested it, walking gingerly along the edge. The ice had flexed like rubber beneath her boots, jagged cracks spreading over the whole sheet in a maze of zigzag patterns. This morning, only a slim rim of ice framed the slough; little slivers of tiny frozen spears broke the ripple of the cold water against the bank.

Irwin and cousin Albert were building a raft at the water's edge. Albert, Adina, and younger brother George, had come to spend the Saturday at Anna's house.

"Hello," said Anna, seating herself beside George. Casting side glances at the yearling calves lined up curiously along the barbed wire fence, Shep nudged his shaggy frame between the children, greeting George with a hurried lick. They watched the activities of the raft-builders at a safe distance.

The boys had assembled planks and logs, hammer and nails. The raft was constructed of parallel poplar logs carefully nailed to two cross planks. Irwin was driving the last spikes in place.

"Let's sail all the way to the Big Slough today," exclaimed Albert, hoping to intimidate Adina, who was a persistent unwanted tag-along.

"If we can get the raft through the run-off," said Irwin doubtfully.

The slough was part of a creek-bed drained by a shallow run-off which wound its way to the Big Slough at the far end of the pasture. In summer the Big Slough served as the community swimming hole.

The boys dragged the raft laboriously to the water's edge. With a mighty heave, the craft was launched.

"Here we go!" yelled Albert, pulling Irwin aboard. Grabbing their rafting poles, they shoved off.

"Wait for me. Wait for me!" shouted Adina angrily, her face flushed, her square stocky figure bouncing up and down as she ran after them along the bank.

Irwin glanced at Albert.

"If she keeps yelling like that, Mother will hear her, and we'll be in trouble," he said disgustedly.

"You're right," sighed Albert.

"O.K. Pest," he said, pulling in to shore again. "Come on."

The victorious one stood triumphantly on the raft. The two boys plied vigorously with their poles. The raft swayed back and forth as the boys gripped the logs tenaciously with bare toes, working steadily in the direction of the run-off.

"Bye," shouted Adina to the deserted pair on the shore. She raised her hands to wave exultingly. At that moment Albert circuled the raft into the run-off - it veered sharply - and Adina, losing her balance, teetered back and forth dangerously on the slippery logs, then plunged broadside into the ice-cold water.

"Help! Help!" she screamed, her feet sticking firmly in the muddy bottom of the run-off.

"Help! Help!" she yelled again frantically, standing in the knee-deep water, "I'm drowning!"

There was the sound of a door banging in the direction of the outdoor privy. With suspenders dangling, Father raced to the water. From the house came Mother, dress and apron streaming in the

wind. The two children stood perplexed. The dog began barking excitedly. The yearling calves, their curiosity now superseded by fear and bewilderment, stampeded awkwardly over the rise in the pasture. Albert and Irwin, having assessed the situation as not critical, were calmly anchoring the raft to ensure its safety before rescuing the drowning girl.

"Help me," cried Adina again in terror, waving her arms wildly above her head.

Having surmised her plight, Father calmly waded into the water, lifted her to his shoulders and brought her safely to shore.

"Come with me," said Mother kindly, mopping the child's face with her apron.

Then suddenly catching sight of the boy's feet, she burst out sharply, "And what are you doing in the cold water with bare feet? Come dry yourselves and warm up before you catch pneumonia."

Holding a drenched Adina by the hand, and followed by two crestfallen heroes, Mother led the way to the house.

Father headed back to the privy to retrieve his jacket, the collie bounding playfully beside him. He cast a backward glance at the slough, and smiled to himself as he saw George seated on the raft, Anna expertly guiding the craft toward the run-off.

****

Tea for Three

To mediate between the two
She sits at tea,
And pours
With certain fingers
Sometimes tinging copper bracelets
On the china
While she rules the quiet table.

Queen of
Silver, cream, and cookies,
Dealing portions
Geometrically across the linen,
To each as she
Politely
Finds dessert.

William very straight,
And George, who goes to college
Taking math,
Sit afternoonly
Waiting for
The tea (which just came in
From somewheres east)
And each his
Dainty bit of cookie,
Served on minton plate
As she sees fit.

Proper hostess,
Edged and laced
And chrystal sure.
With inlaid English cutlery
She parts precisely
Bits of heart
With sugar
And a touch of summer salad.

Pat Taylor

Monument
(on a reproduction of
a Japanese painting)

Your image rhythms,
Silent looming figure,
Shaka
Gather at last;
Wrapping my lingerings,
Welding
All, in blank brown order.

Joanna Van der Goes

Tea Leaves

Sugar-snow in lumps in the fields
amid clusters of tea leaves.
Five pigeons like clear white moons on
the fingers of the breeze.

I am walking the road,
snail on a black rope lying on a
dirty white tablecloth
with acres of toothpick fences
and mud and water
That's tea for spring:

Tea in ditches,
Tea in pools,
Tea in rivers where snow lumps
Soak, saturate and disappear.

The sun fattens on tea and sugar
and glows old gold
while I, I drink in tea
One summer long,
Tan golden brown, brown,
Then winter pale,
while tea leaves waver green,
then settle brown,
and waver green again.

Suzanne Gauthier

EASTER SUNDAY

by Helen Koerte

Walking among the discolored leaves, I can hear the painful shuffling of the branches moving in an old, old wind. Howling packs of swollen air rage mercilessly and crumble the leaves into ghastly shapes as they tumble on the shameful earth where once young blood had mutilated the ground with little drops of superior cruelty. Even in her moments of subtlety, the wind cannot undo the clouds that make hard balls of cotton air spin into the vacuum of men's souls.

I was young when it happened, very young. There's no need to remember. I have travelled many places, but the winds of change could not kill the old memory. So I came back to look at the scarcely lighted lifeless house and the impersonal tall poplars standing soberly in an empty sky.

Most of all I recall the mute overgrown idiot in the house who grinned something awful, making strange facial contractions, like a woman in labor. He was like one of the poplars, silent, static. Then there were the two jolly fat ladies. They were thirty-three years old, but they looked as if they had lived through a whole century. Warm cushions of excessive fat followed them around wherever they went like a protecting shadow and the pails of sweat which drooped from their bulging bodies left a peculiar scent long after they were gone. They were schoolteachers and I know the children were stricken with awe when they watched their corpulent overbearing manners.

Then the teaching came to a sudden halt. There was war in Europe and much dangerous turmoil and all the schools were closed and the old maids spent the time knitting little things for imaginary babies. As for the rest, they engaged in idle conversation. The third sister was a delicate creature, but that wretched soul carried a huge hunchback wherever she went. If ever there was a family of misfits, this was the family.

The youngest son was born with average intelligence. He was a very jovial fellow with red rosy cheeks that blossomed and paled according to the season. He was a true sample of hardy peasant stock and the only pride of the family. At twenty-three this young man married a red-nosed girl and soon after they had red-nosed children. Gustavo actively assisted his father, who was a coal merchant.

To the awkward sisters, Gustavo was a delight to watch and although he was homely and noisy and had never gone past grade ten, he could tell a good joke. In fact he told such good stories that the cushion-like fat underneath their brocaded garments bounced up and down with their laughter.

And how did I fit in to all this? Well, there was a bombing in our street and many houses took fire. I became a displaced person and needed a roof over my head in a hurry. I was eight years old. After the initial shock of losing my own family, the days and weeks at the coal merchant's house went by in monotonous succession. I could hear the wind howl past my window. She was my eternal confidante.

The silence and the monotony was only a prelude to something big and climactic about to happen. When it came it was like the death of the fallen angel, unforgettable and cruel. The day was Good Friday and the year was nineteen fourty-four. The coalmerchant and his family had decided to have rabbit on Easter Sunday, war or no war. It was a pure snow-white rabbit with perceptive eyes and the softest cleanest fur. It had been stuffed and fattened with great devotion by the hungry monsters. Everyday I visited the doomed animal and whispered a few kind words. I called him Jim when no one was around. On Good Friday Gustavo was in splendid humor and the family gathered around him as if worshipping an idol. They all appeared ready for a coy afternoon session of blood. Gustavo held up the smooth white rabbit by the ears for a final inspection, as if he was exhibiting a rare jewel at a diamond Fair.

"Oh!" everyone said with admiration and they smacked their lips. "What a beauty!" The serene yet intense eyes of the rabbit turned

psychotic with fear. They rolled violently in all directions and he made horrible baby-like squeaks. Gustavo showed us the steel razor and I caught a quick reflective glimpse of myself. His lips were moist with impatient heat. I put my head on the table between my arms and I thought I heard the death rattle. But there was just a loud agonizing scream and then all was quiet. Blood flowed freely and openly. "Jim", I said. "Jim." The blood flowed outside underneath the closed door. It covered the coals in the basement and the grass already green with an early Spring. I gazed out of the window as if in a trance. The poplars stood indifferent in the drenched sunshine, their roots were fed with red, rusty blood.

I was white and small and no longer innocent. The mute idiot made delightful squeaks like a black horny vulture. The church bell rang three times. "Bravo! Bravo!" the jolly fat ladies said and clapped their hands. "A good rabbit this will be!"

On Sunday they celebrated Christ's resurrection with a big pot of cut-up rabbit in rusty sauce, and some prayers. I watched them. Like the howling winds I had grown old. I was frightened of myself and the world around me. Tears of regret and premature guilt filled my soul on Easter Sunday. The world is a sinful place and all rabbits are saints!

The following summer there was peace and also the year after. The dainty daughter with the hunchback died at a relatively young age. One of the fat sisters married a milk man. He barely reached her shoulder. The third sister, I am told, stole a large sum of money and flew to the Belgian Congo to be a life-long fugitive. Unless of course some lion or tiger had gotten hold of her for his Christmas dinner. The mute imbecile spent his life squeaking most of the time like an over-sized baby, being a burden on everyone. And Gustavo the rabbit murderer got sick of all those red-nosed daughters and joined the French Foreign Legion, and hides out in the Sahara desert.

As I walk now around the deserted house, kicking the mad pebbles, trampling the sick grass, I see the ageing poplars and I no longer curse them. Old Jim is dead. Blood has flown freely. Justice has been done, I trust.

****

Make Way for the Mourners

Make way for the mourners
white faces of women
black coats and Kleenex
"he is in heaven"
pale plaster walls
corners are crumbling
limp Christs and dark roses
heavy bell telling
a prayer and the lowering
aching and swelling
dead sky, stony sun
wind, and grass growing.

Lorna Bartlett

Silhouettes

Telephone poles point square black fingers
Into the faint coral of night-coming sky.
From their tips wires sprout spontaneously
And stream together toward imperceptible joinings.
A hydro plant: pipes and cylinders darkly exposed
The curvy shell-work of a midnight insect
Squatting for a moment beside the road.

Lorna Bartlett

The Bees

Beneath a Florida-orange sun
    swollen striped bees
    in a Eucalyptus world
build up a honey-combed civilization.

Round a celestial, puffed-up queen
    unceasing, sexless
    they toil and serve, for
her throne is that honey-comb.

The painted monarch
    bestows
    glistening, hungry progeny
upon the half-dark multitudes.

Susan Maitland

Theseus

Daring to enter the dark-mouthed cave
And taste the gloom, and pit what might not be
Against what is--
Stooped with pounding heart and caught breath:
He stumbles into the blackness
Sustained by a frail thread
Twined round a finger:
No thread to bear under combat
But a mute signal only,
That she who waits without may know,
And only that.
For there is no rescue
From the dark chambers of the labyrinth
Nor breaking-spell of its enchanted stopping-places.
Only the thread may break, and broken be
A dangling message, read uncertainly.

Frances Bauer

To Kalamazoo: Return

Come my friend!
Pick up your white cane
I, my worldly crutch
We'll hobble down to Kalamazoo
Talking rhetorically
Of your principles and my money.

To Kalamazoo
Where we'll no longer feel
Like a banana
Squeezed - simultaneously
At both ends.

Kalamazoo!,
A million disjointed faces
Swimming limply
In the Kaleidoscope of time
Refracting rays of light
The weird distortions
Of a thousand hideous clowns
Laughing at the elastic mirrors
In the penny arcade
Of no-man's land.

A grim smile of sadness
At our journey's end.
Our dream
Has turned us into May Flies
Food for the birds
Dried wings for the wind.

Charles Mitchell

Morning

With the patience of the infinitesimal ant,
a slow-burning star, or old eternity,
the fat black spider hangs in the fluid air
from a clear wet thread and slowly squares
the circle of his web.

A bright
blind insect, flying past,
floats into the glossy stuff;
the genial spider dances out,
master-of-ceremonies at the death.
Still dripping with dew, the silky strings
blaze in the sun like a chandelier
of pendant glass and broken wings.

Lorna Bartlett

BURNS' FAMILY OF GOOD FOODS

by Jack Bass

There were about thirty people in the line, including children, adolescents and adults. Someone saw the yellow school bus turn the corner and the message was quickly relayed up and down the unmoving procession. The black-striped vehicle eased over to the curb and the driver pushed the appropriate button to open the door.

The little group entered and quickly divided up the window seats. As the bus groaned its way down the street a woman rose and, while holding on to one of the bus poles, read off a little speech welcoming the group to the fourth "Community Information Tour" of the Parent-Teachers Association.

A half an hour later the little group stood in the industrial plant hallway, listening to their young guide. Her crisp white-and-blue uniform matched the quick flash of her smile as she quickly introduced herself and welcomed them to the plant. "Ladies and gentlemen, on behalf of the Burns Company of Canada may I welcome you to our new home. After you have put on the white "lab" coats please follow me and I will describe the processing operation as you see it happen.

"As you can see, the entire plant has been designed to a continuous one-floor operation. This plan has eliminated time and money lost in the transportation from one operation to the next in our old three-storey building. At the same time, we have centralized our offices, secretary pool, maintenance and storage departments in the one-storey east wing; thus direction and supervision of staff and lines of communication have become more efficient.

"The room at the extreme north-west corner of the building is the computer room, housing the I.B.M. 360 and a staff of four. The computer now does many operations in a fraction of the time clerical staff used to take. In addition to its speed the "Big Sister" of the plant sets up the daily work-flow programs, analyzes

and advises on market conditions and does the billing, invoicing and payroll accounts weekly. Perhaps the most interesting use is in the processing and direction of daily slaughter operations. As you can see, all the slaughter operations are done along one table running the length of the building. Before the animal begins its journey down the table, it is strapped onto a movable platform which will transport it throughout the transformation to food. The weight of the animal is registered on the computer which will then estimate the amounts of waste and meat etcetera that should result. The computer will then follow the animal's progress at every stage."

A man in the audience turned to his son. "You know, Bill, your uncle and I used to work in the old Swift plant. A couple of us would herd the cattle to a corral, someone else would bring the animals one at a time to the slaughter trough and then someone. . . ."

"Yea, but you can see how much better it is now. More efficient, saves a lot of time and money."

"I suppose. . ."

The guide was still smiling as everyone watched a calf being brought in. "Once strapped down, the animal is electronically stunned. This process does not kill the animal; nevertheless it is physically and mentally dead so that it feels or senses nothing of what is to follow.

"Before we begin examining the process, we would like to remind you that all our facilities for meat handling are "hospital sterile". All knives and other instruments used in the process, including the table are made of stainless steel or aluminum, as we have found this the safest to use, and the most economical in the long run. The walls, floors and ceilings are painted white, making inspection for dirt or animal remains more effective. The artificial lighting enables us to keep conditions uniform, throughout our twenty-four hour operation."

A little girl punched her doll in the stomach to make it say "mama".

"The first stage in the processing is the removal of the hide. Years ago this delicate and intricate process was the time-

consuming task of a two-man team. Now it is done by this machine manufactured here in Western Canada."

"Evelyn, isn't it horrible what they do to these poor animals, just look at that!"

"The hides are used in quality leather goods such as coats and hand bags. The largest use is for shoes."

A boy showed his shoes to his father. "Yes, yes very nice."

"Further down the table the cleavers will remove the head, hooves and tail of the animal, and then the carcass is split and the entrails removed. At each dissecting stage, streams of hot water carry the removed portions to separate collecting vats.

The remaining portions are the meats usable for human consumption; after further dissection and cleaning they are frozen to await inspection and then shipment. You'll notice that the end of the table is a clean surface. All parts of the animal have been separately collected for future use.

The entire operation has taken less then seven and a half minutes with the aid of modern technology. No human hands touch the animal after it steps on the movable platform until men come to remove the collecting vats. The residues which at one time were discarded as waste are turned into secondary products such as steamed bone meal, gelatin and fertilizer.

That concludes our tour, ladies and gentlemen, and on behalf of the Burns Company may I say that it was a pleasure having you here and we hope you enjoyed your visit and found the tour informative.

Now if you will place your "lab" coats in the waste container, they'll be taken care of later. While you're waiting for the bus to arrive we can enjoy a cup of coffee in the lunch next door. "Dutifully the group of thirty adjourned to the lunch room.

The pale white room was planned for exactly thirty people. After everyone had chosen their drink or food from the vending machine they assembled around the arborite tables in seven groups of four with two children pushing as many buttons as they could reach on the machines.

several people had purchased pastry.

At 4:45 the yellow-door yawned open and the Parent-Teachers Association tour group filed back on the bus. The students were discussing the advancements of technology, the women resumed introducing husbands and one little boy was showing everyone his brown shoes.

****

Triple Exposure

I

The boy in the red snow-suit
stands on the highest snow-bank
in the park
and shouts
that he is king of the castle
and the rest are dirty rascals.
His cheeks, lost in the warm wool
of his scarf tied by a gentle hand,
swell with the force of a conquering cry,
and his eyes outdazzle
the million eyelets of the sun
knitting a swan-skin blanket
of November snow.

II

I remember the boy in the red snow-suit.
He posed for a picture with his overactive dog
that would not quit shaking its tail.
He stood on the bank and waved to his mother
then squealed and laughed as he fell
and landed on his padded arse
in the frosty field
where haloes of breath
surrounded faces
beaming behind their scarves
that seemed to merge into one another
in one well-knit group,
each waiting, in his anonymity,
to take his chance and do what the boy had done.

III

I am the boy in the red snow-suit.
I fell, and never reached the top again
that day,
or any other day.
From that moment,
preserved by a black box,
snatched in a moment of light,
I knew that my pride would force me
to join the bigger boys
in their withdrawn world.
It would mean nothing to climb the bank again.
Often, after falling on the brittle ice
or masking my face in a snow-ball fight,
I remembered my mastery.
Now, passing the children,
It seems curious that the boy in the red snow-suit
should stand tall in the picture
as the camera shot him down.

Ronald Bonham

The Net

Red-faced and tiny, crying angrily
Fists clenched and kicking hard, he wills this world
At one. He does not know that he is free.

Later, blowing dandelion puffs, green-fields furled
Time is of his own making; his anger is gone
For his hurts have healed; the world round him has curled.

Despite him, summer fades and he's alone
With visions of things dying; dead leaves wind
Round him in the blast that strips him to the bone.

The intricate ivory makes in the icy wind
A pattern of leaves and twigs, a net so fine
He sees that reds and silver have entwined

His captive heart,--a bird that's caught in lime,
Centered in a world where every pulse beat is in time.

Carol Kleiman

THE DREAM-MOTHER

by Pat Taylor

"Terwilliger!" screamed the teacher, his face one great leer. "What is the answer? Look at me, brat, what is it?"

"Two and two," mumbled Terwilliger, trying to understand what was happening. "Two and two is four, teacher!"

"Wrong! - animal - liar - you're wrong!"

"But you said that two and two was four."

The teacher leaned close, so that his breath fluttered the papers on Terwilliger's desk. "That was an hour ago," he grinned. Laying his long hands on the boy's face, he began to strangle him.

Terwilliger woke up. "Help me," he said calmly, almost as an instinctive reaction. He dreamed every night, and every night he woke and said the same words.

"Mother," he called in the darkness.

"Yes, dear."

"Are you there?"

"Of course, I am, darling."

Terwilliger opened the bedroom door, and light burst upon his eyes. He squinted.

Mother was crucified again. She lay on the ceiling, fastened there with fine wires. They cut into the soft flesh of her wrists; slitting the veins, which opened like black mouths and cried blood onto the floor. The rest of her skin was white.

"How are you, dear?" she asked quietly. Most of her face was hidden. Terwilliger could make out only one soft clear eye.

"I'm fine, mother; I had a dream again."

"Oh, Terwilliger - poor Terwilliger. And it's still so late. Go and look out-side, darling. Tell mother if it's lovely."

"Yes, mother."

Terwilliger stepped onto the patio. The late night sun hung burning orange over the horizon, firing the sky into a vast sullen ember. From the forest he heard the gentle flaffing of the night-gaunts. All else was silent.

"Mother," he said, returning to the room. "It's lovely out, I wish you could see it." He watched his reflection flow and swell in the dark red pool on the floor.

"I wish I could see it, too," said the voice above. Terwilliger thought he heard a touch of regret. He looked up once more at the wounds.

"Good night mother," he said.

"Good night. Don't worry about the dreams, Terwilliger; I'm here."

Terwilliger closed the door and lay down. It was no good; he would dream again. Once, it was enough to know she was there, with the gentle open wounds rushing their breath about him - a breeze of voices and colours. Now it was not enough. Something fumbled against the wall, and a dark form crossed the window.

****

Night

Night
black as charred newspapers
yesterday's incinerator.
A shroud for nameless
people
tethered to their lamps.

Night
jawbones of burning black
swell above streetlights.
A sanctuary for unknown
thoughts
eclipsed by city hydro.

Night
now old and threadbare
cloaks the street and crumples.
From the nocturnal edge of day
a tinny trumpet
heralds morning.

Susan Maitland

Golden Gate Bridge

Your orange spans, like sunrise,
Unfold over the blue water
Between this pastel city
And the morning hills.

Swung with such sureness
Between these worlds
You seem not to sway,
But, like a god's arm
Fixed, to distance,
To transform, and join.

Frances Bauer

A Quiet Dying Sun

A quiet dying sun,
and by the country hedge
a coupling:
loosening thighs, and
low quick cries, that
mingle with the
sparrows stuttering
as before eclipses.
The shadow of serrated wings
elects the darkened victim:
a small shriek
and then
surprised
silence.

Lorna Bartlett

Blue Ants

A demographic forecast for the Celestrial homeland
Thousands of millions more to come - the meek
swarming in unison, trampling the green blades.

The Masses.
March them into the sea one at a time and
the line would never end.

Blue Ants.
guarding, spreading a gigantean state
under the tyrant
forced to revere but still
remain
omnipotent
omniscient
From the beginning of Li
To the end of time.

Susan Foley

They Are Here

Feet on pavement
down to the harbour,
where the road will end.

Ferrygates have jammed
coughing nickels back.
The lady's hand that held the torch
grew heavy as lead, and dropped
by her side.
Arcades buried in sawdust, became
silent, tin graves.
The ivy in the flowerbox
shrivelled.
Roasted-walnuts gone stale, while
pretzels lost their twist,
and the teabag
is soggy and cold
from a long wait.

How quietly the sticks begin,
in a soft
crescendo roll, to
beat, to beat
a louder din.

The skin,
soon
picks up
the throb.

Susan Foley

The Street Is Not Different

The street is not different
From other downtown streets
In other cities
The buildings, the bars-open
For dark suits
For loosened ties and loosening minds.

The stairs lead to darkness;
He climbs them without fear.
They direct his way to others
Who turned -- from the lights.

From eyes that made him feel
Like a fox
Set loose
In a department store
On Ladies' Day.

New arms
Send uncontrolled spasms
Of released excitement
Through his mind.

And when they relax
He numbly remembers
Watching the sky on a summer night
Filled with a restless pattern
Of shooting stars.

And he wonders
As he fondles the warm hardness of his new freedom
How many more stars
Will fall
And be consumed by the night?

Charles Mitchell

Stop. Look.

Stop. Look.
the synchronized bang of
cymbols
in the air.
In the new era of permissiveness,
anything goes
in the new leg and
party plumage sprigs that combine
warbonds and camp vamp
and leave him
wanting more.
a good girl or a nice girl
only
her confessor knows for sure.
Catcher in the Rye is out
Lord of the Rings is in
about a three-foot dwarf
with furry feet
out to destroy
the world.
and who really cares if God
is dead,
was he ever alive, and
breathing hard down our necks,
tossing thunderbolts, or hammering
Chevy's on tall cliffs
with sea-spray?
A protest against hypocrisy,
a Great Society
labelled like ketchup jars
on a shelf.
Puppets of a plot
part of the Big Picture that
lasts, and lasts, and lasts.

Susan Foley

THE LAST DROP OF SUNLIGHT

by Sandra Anderson

Max paused to inhale the heady bouquet of his Scotch before delicately raising the glass to his lips and letting a little of the rich russet-coloured liquid slip warmly down his throat. As he crookedly peered through the glass into the crackling fire, myriad flowing sunbursts seemed to dance around the frosty chunks of crushed ice. Luxuriously stretching and waggling his toes at the tongues of flame licking the pine logs, he eased his ample six-foot frame into a more comfortable position on the wine plush-covered sofa. "Ah, this is living," he sighed. All he'd ever wanted was simply to enjoy life. Wasn't that what everyone wanted? With a shudder he thought of Muriel, the one possible exception to this rule.

He leaned over lazily to caress the huge mass of soft white fur snoring at his side. The old sheepdog grunted comfortingly in return. "Ah, yes, everything I want is right here in this room," he mused, biting off the end of a thick wine-soaked cigar. But he'd had to learn this the hard way. Muriel had seemed the finishing touch, the perfecting detail of an almost - perfect life.

When she'd walked into the studio seven months ago to have her portrait painted, his artist's eye had immediately recognized her as the kind of exquisite object fit to adorn his chambers, along with the priceless paintings, rare antiques, and stuffed game heads. As they chatted through the sittings, he'd come to realize that this tall slender lady was unlike any of the girls he'd ever known; she had a great deal of self-respect, reserve, and what he termed "class". She had come from a very poor family, and was now supporting herself by working in a library.

Max had unwittingly begun this amorous adventure, however, with his usual tactics. On their first date he walked boldly up

to the door of her frugal apartment bearing a gorgeously wrapped eight-pound box of chocolates. But she had exclaimed so many times that, "he really shouldn't have," "they must have cost so much money" and it was "such a waste," that he'd been quite disappointed and ended by eating them all himself. She didn't drink, and disliked going to expensive eating-places because she became so disturbed about the prices on the menu that she quite lost her appetite. On one such occasion, shortly after their engagement, Max was gazing at the flickering candle light reflected in her emerald eyes, dreamily swaying to the soft rhythms of the dinner music, and eagerly anticipating the magnificent meal he was about to order, when Muriel leaned thoughtfully over the table and whispered, "Don't you think you should lose some weight, Maxwell?" This remark rather offended Max, and he replied in a hurt voice that he liked being fat and that he was very comfortable this way. He was hopelessly under her spell, however, and was soon persuaded to go on a diet. "I mean right now, Maxwell, or you'll put it off forever." As he watched a steaming platter of sirloin steaks bounce past his nose, he licked the saliva from his chin and resolutely nodded his head in assent. Muriel immediately began to write down an appropriate diet which he promised to follow rigorously. Max was bobbing up and down throughout, trying to peer over the elaborate center-piece and find out what was in store for him. "Couldn't you put in some sherry with my meals? No? Just one after dinner? No? At parties then? Oh, splendid!" Max soon resented having been cornered into this hasty decision and his second thoughts were quite bitter. The waiter was somewhat taken aback when he received an order for salad and cold-cuts for two, and one humble pie.

Max finally decided he could no longer avoid the inevitable encounter between his future wife and his somewhat eccentric group of friends. So a party was planned for the happy couple, to be held a week before their wedding. As they approached the elegant residence of one of Max's artist friends, Jack O'Connor, Muriel and her intended were hailed by a volley of welcoming shouts.

"Max baby, where you been hiding?"

"Old Max Rawlings! Did you bring your guitar?"

"Hey, man, you got yourself a real beaut, didn't you?"

And the party was every bit as "Bohemian" as Max had feared. Muriel's gracious smile was icily frozen to her lips, and, declining any dances, she bided her time by passively witnessing the proceedings and vowing that never again would they attend such a disgusting affair. The steady stream of liquid being poured into Max's glass was interrupted only at sparse intervals when his fiancee approached to suggest gently between clenched teeth that, "Perhaps he'd had enough to drink?" Max was beginning to get irritated at Muriel's disdainful attitude, when suddenly she accosted him in a seething rage. "I saw you ogling that voluptuous brunette," she snapped. "That horrible gown she's wearing is - well it's positively . . ."

"Yes, it is, isn't it?" Max replied affably, contemplatively fingering his beard and stealing a sidelong glance at the plunging neckline in question. As he directed his attention towards Muriel's severe black dress, he reflected that he had once considered her excessive modesty appealing. Now he heartily resented it and cynically remarked to himself that she probably got dressed and undressed with her eyes closed.

"That's just what you'd like, isn't it!" she hissed. "A brainless fleshpot!"

"Well, now that you mention it . . .," returned Max, feeling rather beligerant and very tipsy.

"Why don't you just go dance with her!"

With a curt bow and military salute, he turned on his heels and strode over to the brunette, who happened to be Jack's sister and an old friend of his. Max loved dancing, and had a fine time cavorting through various interpretations of the Tango, the Frug, and the Cha-Cha with his all-too-willing partner. In between numbers, each would draw off in one breath a glassful of whatever was handy.

At about three A.M., breathless and laughing, Max began lunging around in search of his fiancee. Amazingly enough, she was

waiting at the door with their coats. They rode home stiffly and silently in the cab, until Max finally roared, "Oh, Get it off your chest!" thinking that, in Muriel's case, this was purely a figure of speech.

Fixing her gaze on Max as though she'd suddenly noticed a fat bearded toad sitting beside her, Muriel tautly replied that she was fortunately not prone to violent scenes and hysterics, and sat brooding the rest of the way to her apartment.

She seemed to have forgotten about the latter declaration, however, when she phoned the next morning. Max was feeling terrible and somehow thought it was her fault, although three martinis, three scotch-on-the-rocks, and half a dozen unidentified liquids also had something to do with it. He was willing to make up and admit they'd both acted foolishly when the phone rang. Muriel, however, would only admit that he had acted foolishly.

"No, Muriel, I don't want to be a gentleman. I prefer being human. Well, I'm very sorry to hear that your grandfather died of alcoholism. Of course I realize I'm not a teen-ager anymore. No, I didn't say god-damn it anyway, I said fiddle-dee-dee!!--Stop crying Muriel, now stop that. I'm sorry it all happened. Yes, I promise I'll try harder. Listen, I know you don't like my eight-by-ten foot bed, so today we'll pick out a new bedroom suite. O.K.? Meet you in front of Genser's at 1:00."

Max arrived a half hour early and went into the adjoining coffee shop for a bite of lunch. As he sat down in a dingy little booth, he was suddenly aware of how desperately he wanted a hot fudge sundae. For weeks he'd been hankering for a sundae, any kind of a sundae, but especially chocolate fudge. "You'd think I was pregnant," he muttered, and when the waitress begged his pardon he replied triumphantly, "Bring me a hot fudge sundae!"

"Just one won't hurt, and she'll never find out, he reasoned. He sat perfectly still and felt rather ridiculous with his spoon poised midway between the sundae dish and his receptively

positioned mouth, when Muriel entered the shop. "Want some?"

"Oh Maxwell! How could you! After you promised! How can I ever trust you again! Oh, and it's hot fudge and marshmallow, the most fattening of all!" Muriel exlaimed in a crescendoing series of ejaculations.

"Yes, and I'm going to have another!" he shouted ecstatically, and sprang out of his seat to hail the waitress. "Another sundae! Make it a double! Three more!" He gleefully hollered after the retreating figure of his ex-fiancée, "I want you to remember for as long as you live (though I can't imagine what you have to live for) as you hoard your soggy teabags, wear blouses buttoned over your chin, swallow that last ghastly mouthful of cold coffee rather than pour it down the drain, and quibble over the last drop of sunlight before turning on the lights, remember that in the whole world there is at least one person who dares to eat hot fudge sundaes! Hah!"

"Poor Muriel," thought Max, nodding before the dying fire. With a slight smile of regret, he shook his head, and then quickly downed the rest of his Scotch.

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A Penny For Your Thoughts, She Said

Woman,
I have known you too long,
Seen you too much,
Heard you too often.
Once
Everything you did
Was magic,
Everything you said
Was music.
But where is the wonder of magic
When I've found out all your tricks?
And the same song played too often
Stops being music.
The world is full of women,
And women full of surprises.
All, that is,
But you.

Moira Bell

A 20th Century Solution to the Romantic Problem

Too soft
To prove his manhood
To his wife;
He turned into a realist
And convinced her
She was frigid.

Sidney Todres

Poet and Peasant

How do I love thee? Are you kidding?
How do I love THEE? Okay, okay.
Let me count the ways.
I love you --
(Oh all right, THEE)
With my mouth,
With my hands,
With my body,
With--
What?--O no. I'm sorry.
My heart's busy pumping blood,
My mind (forgive me) is miles away,
And I sold my soul years ago.
But honey, you know
All of me that's free (excuse the pun)
Belongs to you.
So smile, lover.

Moira Bell

Upon Having Jaundice

Fever-fed I looked at the cracked ceiling.
Threads coming together like spiderwebs.
Eyes; dying sea-shells white-washed into yellow.
The cream-colored body perplexed in nausea
knows no pain nor waspish stinging.
Just apathy!
Did ever a chinese feel pain in feeling yellow?
Unless.....
But that's another matter!

A feeling of time enters my tongue
where the sweet breath has vanished.
Jaws locked.
The unconventional eyes wander in a patched up sky
To dream worlds in another land.
To crawl close to insect spaces,
To taste the color of the flower,
The crocus cutting light my dream.
Unless.....
If there were someone in need of love.
I would!
With all the yellow that is in my eyes!....

Helen Koerte

DUPLICITY

A One Act Play

by Ross McLennan

Characters: A cat burglar
A woman
A man (her husband)
A young girl

Scene: A well-furnished gentleman's bedroom in a house in one of London's better districts. In the centre of the back wall are French-doors which lead to an outside balcony. To the right of these doors and against that same wall is a large writing desk and a chair. Next to these, in the corner, is a floor lamp. Half-way along the right wall is a door leading to a hallway. Further along this same wall, closer to the front of the stage, is a large dresser. A rug, large and fluffy, covering the whole floor, extends across the stage from the right wall and ends about two or three feet from the foot of a great double bed, the head of which is against the left wall. Nearer the front of the stage, in that same wall, is another door which leads to a clothes closet and a private bathroom. Above the headboard of the bed hangs a good-sized reproduction of a photograph of Lord Baden-Powell. Upon the bed is a great mound of covers, under which, although unseen, lies the occupant. Next to the far side of the bed is a night-table upon which sits a small lamp.

As the curtain is raised, the handles of the French-doors are moving with a slight, though clearly discernible, sound and through the thin curtains can be seen a dim figure. The doors open slowly and the cat burglar steps softly into the room. He carefully closes the doors and stands for a moment, listening. He is a slim young man, dressed in black trousers, a black turtle-neck sweater and a black sportscoat. His sneakers, however, are white.

He starts towards stage front. The man in the bed snorts and shifts slightly. The cat burglar freezes and waits again. There is silence. The burglar takes a step towards the dresser when there is a sound from the door leading from the hallway. He runs quickly and silently to the dresser and crouches behind the side facing the audience.

A woman, who is the wife of the man in the bed, enters, carrying an ax. She makes no attempt to be particularly quiet in closing the door behind her. She switches on the light. She stands for a moment looking at the bed while the burglar listens desperately. She crosses the stage to the foot of the bed and stands looking down at the great mound of covers. The cat burglar displays extreme agitation upon seeing the ax.

The woman lifts the ax over her head and is just about to bring it down upon the mound of covers when the cat burglar jumps up from hiding.

BURGLAR: For God's sake! That'll kill him! (He is alarmed at the sound of his own voice and, glancing at the bed, adds weakly in a loud whisper:) What I mean is, have you thought of what you're actually doing? (From now until indicated, the burglar speaks in a loud whisper)

WOMAN: (Slowly lowering the ax, she turns towards him, displaying no surprise at his outburst.) Oh. You're the burglar everyone's talking about. You made a mistake coming to this house. Lord knows we're not that wealthy. (She raises the ax again.)

BURGLAR: (Almost hysterically) That doesn't give you the right to ignore me! (Hesitantly as she looks at him) I'm not interfering really. I just don't want to become involved - one way or the other.

WOMAN: (Slowly lowering the ax) Oh, you're not involved. Of course not. How strange!

BURGLAR: (Desperately) But I'm here - that involves me. At least wait until I leave.

WOMAN: If you think that's best.

BURGLAR: (Fiercely) Its not best for Heaven's sake. Its, well, it would be only common courtesy on your part.

WOMAN: Of course. How stupid of me. You're sick.

BURGLAR: Sick?

WOMAN: Your voice is so hoarse. You've probably caught a cold climbing up buildings. (Starts towards the closet door, still carrying the ax.) I'll get you a coat - one of his. It'll probably be too big --

BURGLAR: What are you doing? I have no cold. I'm just whispering. I don't want to waken. . . anybody. . . .

WOMAN: (Stopping beside the bed) Who?

BURGLAR: (His whisper strained to the breaking point and gesturing with his head towards the bed.) Him. Him.

WOMAN: Oh. Oh, don't worry. He won't hear you. Talk as loud as you want. He's stone deaf.

BURGLAR: He's deaf.

WOMAN: Yes, for years.

BURGLAR: (In a normal voice) This is unbelievable. (He jumps at the sound of his own voice and puts his hands over his mouth.)

WOMAN: Its true. He's been completely deaf for years.

BURGLAR: (In a loud whisper again) Are you sure?

WOMAN: Just watch. (She lifts the ax and pounds it down hard upon the floor. The cat burglar jumps. The man in the bed doesn't move.) See that? Still asleep. Dead to the world. Almost.

BURGLAR: (Fascinated and drawing closer to the bed) Amazing! Really, isn't it amazing. (Beginning this speech he stops whispering)

WOMAN: I suppose so.

BURGLAR: (Taking the ax from the woman) Let me try. (Bang) Look at that! I'll be damned! (Bang) Amazing! (Bang. Bang.) Will nothing awake him?

WOMAN: Nothing except the smell of whiskey. And of the maid.

BURGLAR: The maid smells?

WOMAN: Of whiskey.

BURGLAR: What if I shouted something?

WOMAN: He wouldn't hear you.

BURGLAR: (Shouts) Rule Britannia! (The man doesn't stir.) Why, he must have glorious sleeps. (Laughingly) He might well sleep forever - figuratively speaking, that is. (With sudden fright) But the light.

WOMAN: Oh, don't worry, a bit of light won't wake him. He always wears sleeping shades.

BURGLER: Tell me, how did he happen to get this way?

WOMAN: A shotgun went off right behind his head.

BURGLAR: A hunting accident, eh?

WOMAN: (Taking the ax from him) I was holding the gun.

BURGLAR: A careless aim.

WOMAN: I didn't want to shoot him. I was hoping for a heart attack. He's so big and fat, you know, and he's supposed to have a weak heart according to the doctor. The quack. I just succeeded in deafening him.

BURGLAR: Bad luck.

WOMAN: Oh, it has its compensations. I can watch television without having to turn it down. I watch television in bed. (Shrugs) If a shotgun blast couldn't do it nothing else will.

BURGLAR: Then he <u>is</u> your husband.

WOMAN: I'd hardly murder anybody I'm fond of.

BURGLAR: Well, he could have been your brother.

WOMAN: No, he's been dead for over a year now.

BURGLAR: (Glancing at the ax) But he was ill.

WOMAN: No, it happened kind of suddenly.

BURGLAR: Yes, how stupid of me. You're not English. American. Northern states I bet.

WOMAN: That's right.

BURGLAR: I'd say. . . New York.

WOMAN: No, further north. Canada.

BURGLAR: But Canada isn't. . . . Oh yes, your country's famous inferiority complex.

WOMAN: Except I haven't got an inferiority complex. That's why I left.

BURGLAR: Canada's loss. . . .(Smiles doubtfully)

WOMAN: But you wanted to go. Forgive me for keeping you. Its just so wonderful to have someone to talk to without having to wiggle my fingers. You can get out through the front door, if you want, only please don't take anything on the way. (Rests the ax on her shoulder) You haven't taken my jewels have you?

BURGLAR: No! No, I didn't have the time. You entered so suddenly. (Starts towards the door. Turns) Look, you're absolutely bent on doing this?

WOMAN: Don't try and talk me out of it. That'd be something <u>he</u> would do.

BURGLAR: I dare say he would. But you approach this thing so casually.

WOMAN: What do you mean?

BURGLAR: Well. . . . Look, will you put that thing down. It must be rather heavy. (She puts ax down on the floor beside the bed. He looks relieved.)
My presence here doesn't seem to make a difference. I am a witness to this. . . thing. . . and usually a witness is the last thing wanted.

WOMAN: But you couldn't do anything. You're breaking the law yourself. We're brothers-in-arms.

BURGLAR: But hardly in the same category.

WOMAN: I was afraid to ask you, since you said you didn't want to be involved. . . ! But I could use your help.

BURGLAR: To clean up the mess and carry out the pieces?

WOMAN: (Walking to centre of the stage) I would appreciate your opinion. You could provide me with a disinterested viewpoint.

BURGLAR: Your own seems disinterested enough.

WOMAN: What do you think of my method?

BURGLAR: Oh, it'll work I'm sure.

WOMAN: No, I mean what do you think of it comparatively?

BURGLAR: Well, its not the subtlest way of going about it. The ax is a rather clumsy, unsophisticated instrument. . . .

WOMAN: Something an upper class wife wouldn't use, right?

BURGLAR: Not for every-day jobs at any rate.

WOMAN: I'm approaching this scientifically. Statistically its been shown that 89.9% of upper class wives who murdered their husbands did it with poisons. Most of the others used guns and knives. There was one woman who sabotaged her husband's iron lung during a power failure and another who did use an ax. But it was discovered later

that she was the daughter of a coalminer.

BURGLAR: She wouldn't count, eh?

WOMAN: That's right. Oh, its foolproof. Even better than Lady Bennet's famous method.

BURGLAR: Ah, yes, Lady Bennet. I. . . visited her home once. (Mutters wolfishly) She was some woman that one. (With bland roguishness) She surprised me in the act.

WOMAN: No doubt. Her husband was a member of the House of Lords. She forced him to take a stand and write a speech on some matter or other. The effort killed him.

BURGLAR: And there are those who say the class system is outmoded. (Nodding toward the bed) He doesn't belong to the House of Lords, does he?

WOMAN: No.

BURGLAR: That's too bad. Being deaf would be a bit of an asset.

WOMAN: It'd be no good anyway. The authorities became suspicious of all the speeches being made and discovered that most of the members who were making them were dead soon after.

BURGLAR: How could they tell? (He wanders over to the dresser and picks up a silver cigarette case.)

WOMAN: Stuck pins into them I suppose. Anyway, they finally figured out what was going on.

BURGLAR: (Giving the cigarette case a cursory inspection and putting it back) Behind every great man was lurking a woman. (He turns) But I don't think your method is too good really. I mean you being from Canada - land of lumberjacks, etc.

WOMAN: Good Lord, do you still think of Canada like that? (He shrugs) I guess it doesn't matter whether its true or not. If the police think like that they'll suspect me after all. I thought it was perfect. What'll I do?

BURGLAR: Not to worry, you'll think of something I'm sure. (Suddenly there is an unearthly shriek from outside

and the woman jumps)

WOMAN: What on earth!

BURGLAR: (Going to French doors) Its nothing, just my look-out. He's probably wondering what's taking me so long. (He peeks out, waves and walks back into the room.)

WOMAN: But what a horrible sound!

BURGLAR: Its the cry of the African B'hani Bird.

WOMAN: But what would a bird from Africa be doing here in London?

BURGLAR: That's why my partner wanted to use it. Nobody would recognize it. He's a rather simple fellow. Besides its the only bird call he knows.

WOMAN: Its enough to wake the dead.

BURGLAR: (Looking at the bed) Not him, though.

WOMAN: No, oh what will I do now?

BURGLAR: Why do you have to <u>kill</u> him? He may be despicable - he is, isn't he?

WOMAN: (Looking distastefully at the bed) Of course.

BURGLAR: Yes, well, he may be despicable, but to <u>kill</u> him. . . You know. . . . Think of Albert Schweitzer - his reverence for life.

WOMAN: (Looking distastefully at the bed) Yes, but there's no reason to debase oneself before it.

BURGLAR: Why not simply divorce him? I did my wife.

WOMAN: Oh, there'd be an awful scandal. I'd just die.

BURGLAR: Ah, but maybe he would as well.

WOMAN: But we'd be divorced by then and it wouldn't matter.

BURGLAR: Yes, I see. (Lightly) Well, the best thing for you to do now is to have a good rest and think it over. You'll think of something later, I'm sure.

WOMAN: (Sighs) I suppose so. (Glancing at window) Its getting light and he wakes up early. I'm so tired.

BURGLAR: (Walking with her to the door) I am sorry if I spoiled your plans. (They stop at the door.)

WOMAN: Oh, no, don't be silly. After all, I asked for your opinion. Its just that I'm so disappointed. There's no telling how long I'll have to wait until I think of something better. (Smiles) It was so nice to meet you.

BURGLAR: (Offering his hand) You were most charming.

WOMAN: (Taking his hand) You won't stay for a cup of coffee? Or something?

BURGLAR: (Smiling) No thank you. I have to put the B'hani Bird to bed. (He opens the door.) Good-night.

WOMAN: Thank you for being so understanding. Not many men could be as understanding where a woman is concerned.

BURGLAR: Oh, I understand women better than the average fellow. I won't admit to it though. I did once and my manhood was questioned.

WOMAN: (Smilingly) Good-night. Or rather good-morning. (He smiles and she leaves. He closes the door. He stands for a moment and then turns and walks, whistling, across the room to the dresser. Still whistling, he picks up the cigarette case and slips it into the inside pocket of his sportscoat. He turns, looks at the bed and shakes his head.) Positively amazing. (He walks, whistling, to the French windows, opens them and leaves, closing

the doors noisily behind him.
A few seconds pass and then the bed clothes move convulsively. The old man sits up in the bed. He is fat and wears a great handlebar moustache.)

MAN: She's gone. Thank God! It was getting so I could hardly breathe. (Turning and looking down beside him) Are you all right, my dear? (At the same time he pulls back the covers, revealing a young girl beside him who immediately sits up, shaking her hair and gulping in the fresh air.)

GIRL: Yes, I think so, sir.

MAN: (Cupping his ear) What?

GIRL: (Nodding vigorously) Yes!

MAN: Good. I'm certainly glad you heard her coming. But she said she was going to her mother's for the night. And what the devil was she doing here so long?

GIRL: There was a burglar here, too.

MAN: (Cupping his ear) What?

GIRL: (Shouts) A thief! It was him I heard first! (He looks at her blankly) Oh, never mind.

MAN: I don't understand her, curious woman. Never could get the hang of foreigners. Ah well, all's well that ends well. (He grabs the girl playfully and pulls her across him so that her head hangs over the side of the bed nearest to the audience. She sees the ax and looks wide-eyed up into the audience) If she knew that you were here with me (Laughing), she'd kill me.

GIRL: (Delicately pushing the ax under the bed) Ignorance is bliss.

CURTAIN

Open Composition

I begin, in all Fairness, with letters to
Titian,
imploring him to dig a hole under the gravel
and beneath the Penny Dreadfuls,
he will sanction then
white whales.
Aghast, you say, NO!
But I, who have tasted more confetti than you,
can change minds
and will spend eagerly
a bag of dimes
in hooded slot machines,
their steely mouths accepting;
rolling their lemon eyes.

Martin Levin

.

.
sir
sir
your dot fell offa

.

your i

well pick it up
you beggarly knave
or for your hind
the wooden stave

yessir
yessir
here
it
is
.

Frank Schoen